

Dear Members of the Environment Committee,

I am very pleased and grateful that you have afforded this landmark bill a public hearing again, since our last was a casualty of the covid epidemic.

Please note that this is the FOURTH submission of this bill for passage in the state legislature.

Below is my online testimony submitted on behalf of HB 5293.

I feel my testimony is paramount in helping you to understand the genesis, history, and precedent of this legislation.

From first hand experience, I can still assure you that support for this bill in CT is both very wide, and very deep.

I, and many citizens are hoping you will all fully support / co sponsor, HB5239.

Thank you very much for your compassion for animals and concern for the safety of the citizens of our state,

Best regards ,
Leah Haut

ONLINE HEARING TESTIMONY FOR HB5293:

I am the individual who spearheaded the successful campaign for a city ban on the use of wild and exotic animals in Bridgeport, CT in 2018, which was passed UNANIMOUSLY by the 19 members of its City Council.

The powerful symbolism of this city ordinance cannot be overstated. Bridgeport showed itself to be a forward looking city that respects and honors its cherished legacy of P.T Barnum, while embracing the future; a world without cruelty and exploitation of captive animals. The poignant story of the linkage of circuses and Bridgeport is one of epic proportions; a rich and multi layered saga.

Media coverage of Bridgeport ban:

<https://www.eyenews.com/bridgeport-connecticut-passes-wild-animal-circus-ban/>

After more than 30, years as an educator, I have gained much insight into child development and the value of a moral based education for our youth.

One of the tenets of good moral education is that "children learn what they live".

It is also a well known tenant in the psychological community that witnessing animal abuse is a form of trauma.

Why are we allowing our children to be subjected to trauma by witnessing animal abuse in the entertainment industry?

I have been present at the close of shows in CT where children are both distraught and confused by what they have witnessed,

Children's keen sense of compassion and empathy render them especially sensitive to the poor condition, apathy, depression, and brutal handling of the animals they see in these shows.

Even VERY young children are cognizant of the inherently sinister nature of this industry, and the abuse these animals suffer. In addition to the psychological and emotional harm we subject our children to, we are also teaching them to become desensitized to the suffering and callous exploitation of sentient wildlife.

I am sure you would agree that we should instead be inculcating values of compassion, kindness, and respect for the dignity of all life for both them, and generations to come.

These two young girls attended a show of Garden Bros circus at the Danbury Ice Arena with their Mom, (Danbury residents), and left in tears....

Please view this very short video interview with them:

<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1e3pclu13LJKOaDtDmulmi9sgyWWM7h65/view?fbclid=IwAR1e6i5l6OkuTDk7pmk7MQzuHq0qa0ZpRXraVfKs7KoC-XURGSSrZzCc-v0>

My colleague Jill Alibrandi I and were responsible for the Ice Arena shutting its doors to such horrific shows, shortly after this video was made :

<https://www.newstimes.com/local/article/Danbury-Ice-Arena-will-no-longer-host-animal-13777480.php>

The vast majority of Americans are against these cruel shows. They do not wish to see archaic displays that threaten public safety, and feature animal abuse.

Cruelty to animals does not provide wholesome family entertainment, nor does it provide any educational content whatsoever. It is time to stop exposing our children to animal abuse, and the clear and present danger of physical harm posed by these performances. It is long past due to stop promoting the repugnant notion that sentient and sensitive animals exist only for exploitation and profit, and should be deprived of freedom, dignity and fulfillment of their most basic needs.

By their very nature, traveling shows cannot provide for even the most BASIC needs of wild and exotic animals, (or ANY animals for that matter). These captive animals spend the vast majority of their time in EXCRUCIATING LONELINESS, chained in windowless trucks lacking climate control, and standing or lying in their own waste. They are deprived of natural habitat, social and communal ties, and enrichment of any kind. They are also beaten, shocked and stunned into submission. Again, and equally important, these shows constitute a very real threat to public safety as proven by the many shockingly violent incidents, (too numerous to recount here), that have occurred as a result of keeping highly stressed animals in inappropriate enclosures and situations.

Tragically, these terrifying incidents become forever seared in the memory of attendees present, including children.

Thank you all in advance for your support of this timely and forward looking legislation. It will ultimately protect Connecticut's citizens from the significant dangers inherent in this exploitive industry, and will help promote more wholesome, life affirming, and enlightened values for our state and its future generations to come.

Sincerely,
Lisa Leah Haut
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